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Eugene S. Smotkin

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EXAMINER

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**BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS  
AND INTERFERENCES**

Application Number: 09/891,200  
Filing Date: June 26, 2001  
Appellant(s): SMOTKIN, EUGENE S.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Morrison & Foerster LLP  
For Appellant

**EXAMINER'S ANSWER**

This is in response to the appeal brief filed 10/03/07 and 12/21/07 appealing from the Office action mailed 12/12/06.

**(1) Real Party in Interest**

A statement identifying by name the real party in interest is contained in the brief.

**(2) Related Appeals and Interferences**

The examiner is not aware of any related appeals, interferences, or judicial proceedings which will directly affect or be directly affected by or have a bearing on the Board's decision in the pending appeal.

**(3) Status of Claims**

The statement of the status of claims contained in the brief is correct.

**(4) Status of Amendments After Final**

The appellant's statement of the status of amendments after final rejection contained in the brief is correct.

**(5) Summary of Claimed Subject Matter**

The summary of claimed subject matter contained in the brief is correct.

**(6) Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal**

The appellant's statement of the grounds of rejection to be reviewed on appeal is correct.

**(7) Claims Appendix**

The copy of the appealed claims contained in the Appendix to the brief is correct.

**(8) Evidence Relied Upon**

5094927	BAUCKE et al	03-1992
5846669	SMOTKIN et al	12-1998
5985113	CROME et al	11-1999

WO 98/21777

DOHLE

05-1998

Norby, T. "Solid-State Protonic Conductors: Principles, Properties, Progress and Prospects"

Solid State Ionics Vol. 125 , 1999, pp. 1-11

Ryu et al "Chemical Stability and Proton Conductivity of Doped BaCeO<sub>3</sub>-BaZrO<sub>3</sub> solid solutions" Solid State Ionics, Vol. 125, 1999, pp. 355-367

Lybye et al "Proton and Oxide Ion Conductivity of Doped LaScO<sub>3</sub>" Solid State Ionics, Vol. 125, 1999, pp. 339-344

### **(9) Grounds of Rejection**

The following ground(s) of rejection are applicable to the appealed claims:

#### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

1. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the appellant regards as his invention.

2. Claims 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which appellant regards as the invention.

3. Claim 84 contains the trademark/trade name "NAFION". Where a trademark or trade name is used in a claim as a limitation to identify or describe a particular material or product, the claim does not comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. See *Ex parte Simpson*, 218 USPQ 1020 (Bd. App. 1982). The claim scope is uncertain since the trademark or trade name cannot be used properly to identify any particular material or product. A trademark or trade name is used to identify a source of goods, and not the goods themselves. Thus, a trademark or trade name does not identify or describe the goods associated with the trademark or

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trade name. In the present case, the trademark/trade name is used to identify/describe a coating of the claimed component and, accordingly, the identification/description is indefinite.

4. Claim 84 is still indefinite as the use of an illustrative table/figure is improper.

Incorporation by reference to a specific figure or table “is permitted only in exceptional circumstances where there is no practical way to define the invention in words and where it is more concise to incorporate by reference than duplicating a drawing or table into the claim.

Incorporation by reference is a necessity doctrine, not for appellant’s convenience.” Ex parte

Fressola, 27 USPQ2d 1608, 1609 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1993) (citations omitted). Where

possible, claims are to be complete in themselves. ***Refer to MPEP 2173.05(s) Reference to***

***Figures or Tables.*** *In this instance, it is pointed out that a first set of claims (i.e. claims 75-82)*

*has been properly delineated and set forth without the use of said table/figure. Accordingly, it is*

*contended that is not imperative or necessary to specifically define the claimed subject matter by*

*using the table/figure. The examiner is also concerned about the possibility that claim 84, as now*

*amended, be technically inaccurate due to the use of a table/figure subject to multiple*

*interpretations.*

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Appellant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

8. Claim 75-76, 80-81, 84-85, 89-90 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Baucke et al 5094927.

As to claims 75-76 and 84-85:

Baucke et al exemplifies in EXAMPLE (sole example) a solid electrolyte 12 composed of a Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> layer 0.5 μm (COL 7, lines 1-7). *Note that Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> is an inorganic material.* In particular, Baucke et al disclose the inorganic nature of the electrolyte material (Col 4, lines 42-45). Electrolyte thickness ranges from 0.001-15 μm (Col 3, lines 65-67). In the EXAMPLE, Baucke et al uses the term “*composed of*” for both electrodes and the electrolyte (Col 7, lines 1-7).

Further exemplified in EXAMPLE is the use of a palladium layer 14 having a thickness of several atoms layers; and a Ni layer having a thickness of 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  (COL 7, lines 1-8). Specifically disclosed is that palladium, or platinum or their alloys can be employed as the electrode material; and that thin-pore free films or sheets such as foils can be employed as electrode (COL 4, lines 12-23). *Sheets such as foils can be laminated onto the electrolyte or vice versa* (COL 4, lines 20-24). Silver or alloys thereof are also useful (COL 5, lines 30-35). Electrode thickness range from 0.1-50  $\mu\text{m}$ ; preferably 0.1-25  $\mu\text{m}$ ; most preferably 0.5-15  $\mu\text{m}$  (COL 4, lines 32-35).

*1<sup>st</sup> Examiner's note: the term "composed of" is equivalent to the close-ended transitional phrases "consisting of" or at least "consisting essentially of" {The transitional phrase "composed of" has been interpreted in the same manner as either "consisting of" or "consisting essentially of," depending on the facts of the particular case. See AFG Industries, Inc. v. Cardinal IG Company, 239 F.3d 1239,1245, 57 USPQ2d 1776, 1780-81 (Fed. Cir. 2001)} (See MPEP 2111.03 [R-3] Transitional Phrases).*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Examiner's note: it is noted that an arrangement of electrodes and electrolyte are commonly known in the fuel cell art as a membrane electrode assembly. Thus, the membrane electrode assembly is constituted by an electrolyte material being supported by the electrode. Hence, the teachings of Baucke et al fully encompass the concept of providing "A proton conducting membrane designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell which membrane consists essentially of". It is reasonable to argue that the membrane electrode assembly as a whole represents a membrane per se.*

As to claims 80-81 and 89-90:

Electrode thickness range from 0.1-50  $\mu\text{m}$ ; preferably 0.1-25  $\mu\text{m}$ ; most preferably 0.5-15  $\mu\text{m}$  (COL 4, lines 32-35). *In the instant case, the electrode thickness corresponds to the support thickness.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Examiner's note: it is noted that, at least, the end point (i.e. 50  $\mu\text{m}$ , or 25  $\mu\text{m}$  or 15  $\mu\text{m}$ ) constitutes a valid data point and thus it anticipates the claim as the end point represents a specific disclosure of a discrete embodiment of the invention disclosed by the prior art which amounts to a complete description and, therefore, an anticipation of the claimed range. **See Ex Parte Lee 31 USPQ2d 1105.***

Thus the claiming of a new use, new function or unknown property which is inherently present in the prior art does not necessarily make the claim patentable. *In re Best*, 562 F.2d 1252, 1254, 195 USPQ 430, 433 (CCPA 1977). Where appellant claims a composition in terms of a function, property or characteristic and the composition of the prior art is the same as that of the claim but the function is not explicitly disclosed by the reference, the examiner may make a rejection under both 35 U.S.C. 102/103. The burden of proof is on appellant *In re Fitzgerald*, 619 F.2d 67, 70, 205 USPQ 594, 596 (CCPA 1980) (quoting *In re Best*, 562 F.2d 1252, 1255, 195 USPQ 430, 433-34 (CCPA 1977)). **See MPEP 2112.**



***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

9. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

10. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smotkin et al 5846669 in view of the publication "Solid-State protonic conductors: principles, properties, progress and prospects" by T.Norby (hereinafter referred to as "*the Norby's publication*").

The present application is now directed to a component wherein the disclosed inventive concept comprises the coated support.

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

Smotkin et al disclose an electrolyte system for fuel cells comprising an acid electrolyte, a base electrolyte and a proton permeably dense phase separating the acid electrolyte from the base electrolyte (ABSTRACT). Smotkin et al disclose that their invention relates to electrolyte system for fuel cells operating in a temperature range up to about 300 °C (COL 1, lines 10-15).

Figure 1 below illustrates the dense phase proton permeable material 17 separating acidic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 15 from basic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 16 (FIGURE 1/ COL 4, lines 44-55). It is disclosed that the dense phase proton permeably material comprises a foil of a metal hydride (COL 4, lines 57-64/ COL 3, lines 12-18). *Thus, the metal hydride foil serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte containing matrixes which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.*

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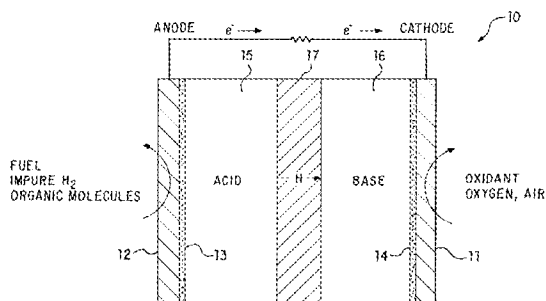


FIG. 1

*First Examiner's Note: since the recited "coating material" (i.e. "the inorganic or composite non-liquid material") covers a very large number of applicable materials which can be used therefor, it is also contended that "a coating material" comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (**See MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof**). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

*Second Examiner's Note: as to the specific preamble reciting "designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell", it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

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Regarding claims 76-77 and 85-86:

Smotkin et al teaches the use of palladium hydride as the metal hydride foil (COL 4, lines 56-65).

Regarding claims 80-81 and 89-90:

Smotkin et al'669 exemplifies the use of a 25 micron palladium foil as the substrate (COL 5, lines 44-50).

Smotkin et al'669 disclose a fuel cell electrolyte component as described above. However, Smotkin et al'669 does not expressly disclose the specific coating material.

The Norby's publication teaches a solid-state protonic conductor (TITLE) which can be used in a fuel cell as a hydrogen permeable membrane (ABSTRACT). It is disclosed that protonic conductivity are candidates for electrolyte in fuel cells (INTRODUCTION). Norby discloses protonic conductors are electrolyte in which hydrogen is transported towards and evolved at the cathode. It is further disclosed that protonic transport includes transport of protons and any assembly that carries protons and/or proton exchange membranes (PEM) (Sections: 2. Principles of Protonic Conduction-Classes of Proton Conductors, & 4.1 Water-containing Systems: PEMs). The Norby's publication reveals that  $\text{Ba}_3\text{Ca}_{1.18}\text{Nb}_{1.82}\text{O}_{8.73}$  (BCN18) shows proton conduction (Section: 3. PROPERTIES). It is disclosed the use of hydrate  $\text{CsHSO}_4$  (SECTION: 2. Principles of Protonic Conduction- Classes of Proton Conductors/ FIGURE 1); and  $\text{SrHPO}_4$ ,  $\text{Sr}(\text{H}_2\text{PO}_4)_2$ , and  $\text{Ba}(\text{H}_2\text{PO}_4)_2$  (SECTION: 4.2 Low-Temperature inorganic proton conductors)

In view of the above, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the specific proton conductor material of the Norby's publication on the metal substrate base of Smotkin et al'669 because the Norby's publication discloses that such specific proton conductor materials are suitable solid-state protonic conductors which can be used in fuel cell applications such as hydrogen permeable membranes. Accordingly, such specific proton conductor material enhances the transport of protons for both chemical processes and energy conversion process (Section: 3. Properties).

11. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smotkin et al 5846669 in view of Crome et al 5985113.

The present application is now directed to a component wherein the disclosed inventive concept comprises the coated support.

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

Smotkin et al disclose an electrolyte system for fuel cells comprising an acid electrolyte, a base electrolyte and a proton permeably dense phase separating the acid electrolyte from the base electrolyte (ABSTRACT). Smotkin et al disclose that their invention relates to electrolyte system for fuel cells operating in a temperature range up to about 300 °C (COL 1, lines 10-15).

Figure 1 below illustrates the dense phase proton permeable material 17 separating acidic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 15 from basic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 16 (FIGURE 1/ COL 4, lines 44-55). It is disclosed that the dense phase proton permeably material comprises a foil of a metal hydride (COL 4, lines 57-64/ COL 3, lines 12-18). *Thus, the metal*

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hydride foil serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte containing matrixes which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.

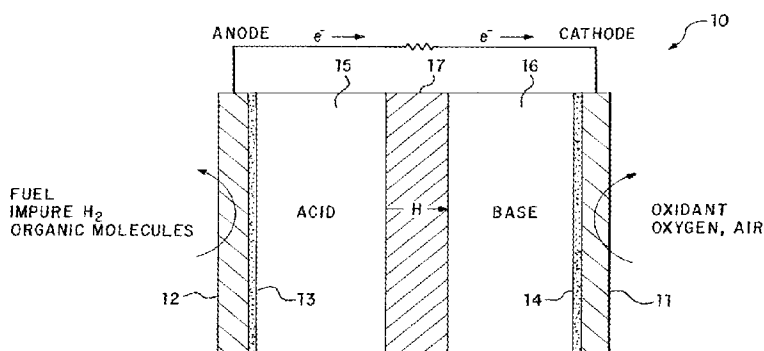


FIG. 1

*First Examiner's Note: since the recited "coating material" (i.e. "the inorganic or composite non-liquid material") covers a very large number of applicable materials which can be used therefor, it is also contended that "a coating material" comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (See MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

*Second Examiner's Note: as to the specific preamble reciting "designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell", it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

Regarding claims 76-77 and 85-86:

Smotkin et al teaches the use of palladium hydride as the metal hydride foil (COL 4, lines 56-65).

Regarding claims 80-81 and 89-90:

Smotkin et al'669 exemplifies the use of a 25 micron palladium foil as the substrate (COL 5, lines 44-50).

Smotkin et al'669 disclose a fuel cell electrolyte component as described above. However, Smotkin et al'669 does not expressly disclose the specific coating material.

Crome et al disclose the following (COL 9, lines 10-26):

For all described embodiments, it is envisioned that the electrolyte material can be selected from the following groups and mixtures thereof: <sup>10</sup>

5) lanthanum gallate  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{Ga}_{1-y}\text{Mg}_y\text{O}_3$  where <sup>25</sup>  
( $0 < x < 0.30$ ) (where  $x=0.10$  is preferred) and ( $0.00 < y < 0.30$ )  
(where  $y=0.20$  is preferred).

Crome et al also envision that the electrolyte material can be selected from a variety of element groups and mixtures thereof including scandium (Sc) (CLAIM 12/ COL 9, lines 10-26).

*Thus, it is asserted that scandium (Sc) can replace gallium (Ga) in the ceramic composite chemical formula.*

In view of this disclosure, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the specific proton conductor material of Crome et al on the metal substrate base of Smotkin et al'669 as Crome et al teaches that, for all described embodiments, it is envisioned that the electrolyte material can be selected from a variety of groups and mixtures including an alternative use of scandium element (Sc) as this allows the fuel cell stack to operate in multiple temperature regions including the claimed temperature range and provides efficiency power systems. Moreover, Crome et al directly teach that scandium (Sc) can be a doping element which might substitute or replace any element in electrolyte composite materials. Further, those of ordinary skill in the art knows that scandium (Sc) element may be a substitute element in composite materials as both elements Sc and Ga shows the same chemical valence.

12. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smotkin et al 5846669 in view of the publication "Chemical stability and proton conductivity of doped BaCeO<sub>3</sub>-BaZrO<sub>3</sub> solid solutions" by Kwang Hyun Ryu et al (hereinafter referred to as "*the Kwang's publication*").

The present application is now directed to a component wherein the disclosed inventive concept comprises the coated support.

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

Smotkin et al disclose an electrolyte system for fuel cells comprising an acid electrolyte, a base electrolyte and a proton permeably dense phase separating the acid electrolyte from the base electrolyte (ABSTRACT). Smotkin et al disclose that their invention relates to electrolyte system for fuel cells operating in a temperature range up to about 300 °C (COL 1, lines 10-15).

**Figure 1** below illustrates the dense phase proton permeable material 17 separating acidic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 15 from basic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 16 (FIGURE 1/ COL 4, lines 44-55). It is disclosed that the dense phase proton permeable material comprises a foil of a metal hydride (COL 4, lines 57-64/ COL 3, lines 12-18). *Thus, the metal hydride foil serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte containing matrixes which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.*

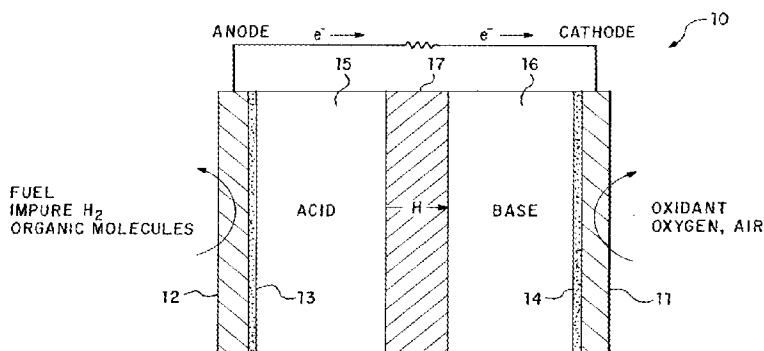


FIG. 1

**First Examiner's Note:** *since the recited "coating material" (i.e. "the inorganic or composite non-liquid material") covers a very large number of applicable materials which can be used therefor, it is also contended that "a coating material" comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (See **MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof**). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent*



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*property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

**Second Examiner's Note:** *as to the specific preamble reciting "designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell", it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

Regarding claims 76-77 and 85-86:

Smotkin et al teaches the use of palladium hydride as the metal hydride foil (COL 4, lines 56-65).

Regarding claims 80-81 and 89-90:

Smotkin et al'669 exemplifies the use of a 25 micron palladium foil as the substrate (COL 5, lines 44-50).

Smotkin et al'669 disclose a fuel cell electrolyte component as described above. However, Smotkin et al'669 does not expressly disclose the specific coating material.

The Kwang's publication teaches solid solutions such as  $\text{BaCe}_{0.9-x}\text{Zr}_x\text{M}_{0.1}\text{O}_{3-\Lambda}$  where M is Gd or Nd and x ranges from 0-0.4 (ABSTRACT). It is disclosed that this composition gives a good compromise between conductivity and stability for fuel cell applications (ABSTRACT).

In light of the above, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the solid composition of the Kwang's publication as the specific proton conducting material on the metal substrate base of Smotkin et al'669 because the

Kwang's publication teaches this composition gives a good compromise between conductivity and stability for fuel cell applications as it has been found that this composite compound exhibits both high conductivity, good stability and an increased in the activation energy for proton transport.

13. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smotkin et al 5846669 in view of the publication "Proton and oxide ion conductivity of doped LaScO<sub>3</sub>" by Dorthe Lybye et al (hereinafter referred to as "*the Dorthe's publication*").

The present application is now directed to a component wherein the disclosed inventive concept comprises the coated support.

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

Smotkin et al disclose an electrolyte system for fuel cells comprising an acid electrolyte, a base electrolyte and a proton permeably dense phase separating the acid electrolyte from the base electrolyte (ABSTRACT). Smotkin et al disclose that their invention relates to electrolyte system for fuel cells operating in a temperature range up to about 300 °C (COL 1, lines 10-15).

**Figure 1** below illustrates the dense phase proton permeable material 17 separating acidic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 15 from basic electrolyte-containing matrix layer 16 (FIGURE 1/ COL 4, lines 44-55). It is disclosed that the dense phase proton permeably material comprises a foil of a metal hydride (COL 4, lines 57-64/ COL 3, lines 12-18). *Thus, the metal hydride foil serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte containing matrixes which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.*

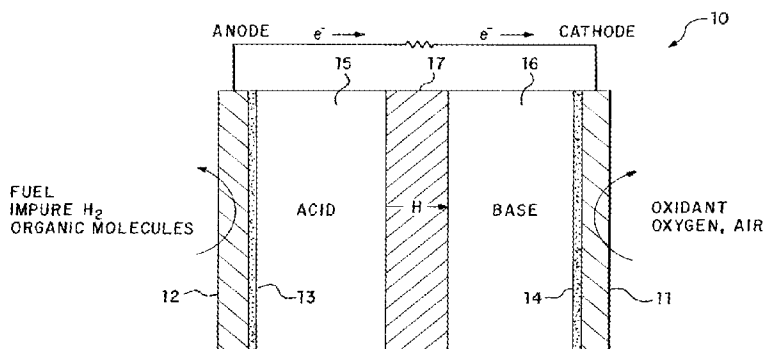


FIG. 1

*First Examiner's Note: since the recited "coating material" (i.e. "the inorganic or composite non-liquid material") covers a very large number of applicable materials which can be used therefor, it is also contended that "a coating material" comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (**See MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof**). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

*Second Examiner's Note: as to the specific preamble reciting "designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell", it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the*

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*claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

Regarding claims 76-77 and 85-86:

Smotkin et al teaches the use of palladium hydride as the metal hydride foil (COL 4, lines 56-65).

Regarding claims 80-81 and 89-90:

Smotkin et al'669 exemplifies the use of a 25 micron palladium foil as the substrate (COL 5, lines 44-50).

Smotkin et al'669 disclose a fuel cell electrolyte component as described above. However, Smotkin et al'669 does not expressly disclose the specific coating material.

The Dorthe's publication teaches that conductivity of  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  has been studied (ABSTRACT), particularly at 400°C (Section: 2. EXPERIMENTAL). It is also disclosed that the conductivity measurements suggests that  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  is also a proton conductor (Section: 3. RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS).

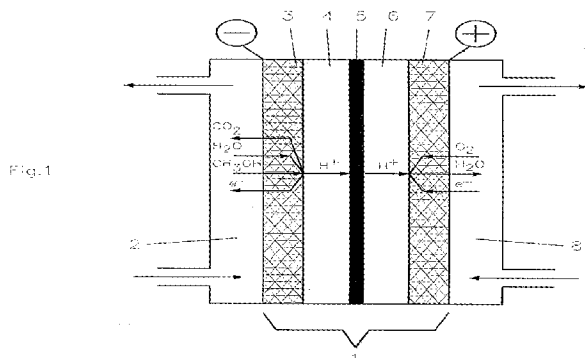
In light of the above, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the compound of the Dorthe's publication as the specific proton conducting material on the metal substrate base of Smotkin et al'669 because the Dorthe's publication teaches that such compound exhibit excellent proton conduction at temperatures below 700°C. Accordingly, the specified compound is a proton conductor showing satisfactory ionic conductivity.

14. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the WO 98/21777 publication (herein called “*the WO’777 publication*”) in view of the publication “Solid-State protonic conductors: principles, properties, progress and prospects” by T.Norby (hereinafter referred to as “*the Norby’s publication*”).

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

The WO’777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrode-electrolyte unit wherein the electrolyte is divided up into two electrolyte layers 4, 6 with a blocking layer 5 therebetween (ABSTRACT). The blocking layer is made from a palladium silver alloy. The electrolyte unit is suitable for fuel cells (ABSTRACT).

**Figure 1** below illustrates the palladium silver alloy foil layer 5 the two non-liquid electrolyte layers 4 and 6 (FIGURE 1). *Thus, the palladium silver alloy foil layer serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte layers which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.*



*First Examiner’s Note: since the recited “coating material” (i.e. “the inorganic or composite non-liquid material”) covers a very large number of applicable materials which can be used therefor, it is also contended that “a coating material” comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific*

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*temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (See MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

*Second Examiner's Note: as to the specific preamble reciting "designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell", it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

As to claims 76-77 and 85-86:

The WO'777 publication divulges that the blocking layer (the support) is made from a palladium silver alloy (ABSTRACT).

With reference to claims 80-81 and 89-90:

The WO'777 publication teaches that the palladium-silver layer has a thickness ranging from 5-50 Tm (page 4, lines 1-2/ page 5, lines 10-15). *In this case, it is noted that, at least, the end points (i.e. 5 Tm and/or 50 Tm) also constitute a valid date point and thus it anticipates the claim as the end point represents a specific disclosure of a discrete embodiment of the invention*

*disclosed by the prior art which amounts to a complete description and, therefore, an anticipation of the claimed range. See Ex Parte Lee 31 USPQ2d 1105.*

The WO'777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrolyte component according to the foregoing description. However, the WO'777 publication fails to reveal the particular coating material.

The Norby's publication teaches a solid-state protonic conductor (TITLE) which can be used in a fuel cell as a hydrogen permeable membrane (ABSTRACT). It is disclosed that protonic conductivity are candidates for electrolyte in fuel cells (INTRODUCTION). Norby discloses protonic conductors are electrolyte in which hydrogen is transported towards and evolved at the cathode. It is further disclosed that protonic transport includes transport of protons and any assembly that carries protons and/or proton exchange membranes (PEM) (Sections: 2. Principles of Protonic Conduction-Classes of Proton Conductors, & 4.1 Water-containing Systems: PEMs). The Norby's publication reveals that  $\text{Ba}_3\text{Ca}_{1.18}\text{Nb}_{1.82}\text{O}_{8.73}$  (BCN18) shows proton conduction (Section: 3. PROPERTIES). It is disclosed the use of hydrate  $\text{CsHSO}_4$  (SECTION: 2. Principles of Protonic Conduction- Classes of Proton Conductors/ FIGURE 1); and  $\text{SrHPO}_4$ ,  $\text{Sr}(\text{H}_2\text{PO}_4)_2$ , and  $\text{Ba}(\text{H}_2\text{PO}_4)_2$  (SECTION: 4.2 Low-Temperature inorganic proton conductors)

In view of the above, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the specific proton conductor material of the Norby's publication on the metal substrate base of the WO'777 publication because the Norby's publication discloses that such specific proton conductor materials are suitable solid-state protonic conductors which can be used in fuel cell applications such as hydrogen permeable membranes. Accordingly, such

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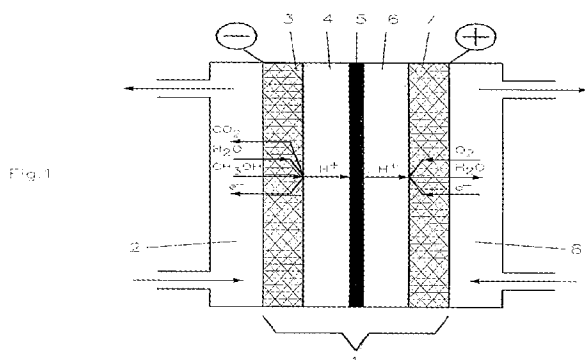
specific proton conductor material enhances the transport of protons for both chemical processes and energy conversion process (Section: 3. Properties).

15. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the WO 98/21777 publication (herein called “*the WO’777 publication*”) in view of Crome et al 5985113.

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

The WO’777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrode-electrolyte unit wherein the electrolyte is divided up into two electrolyte layers 4, 6 with a blocking layer 5 therebetween (ABSTRACT). The blocking layer is made from a palladium silver alloy. The electrolyte unit is suitable for fuel cells (ABSTRACT).

**Figure 1** below illustrates the palladium silver alloy foil layer 5 the two non-liquid electrolyte layers 4 and 6 (FIGURE 1). *Thus, the palladium silver alloy foil layer serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte layers which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.*



*First Examiner’s Note: since the recited “coating material” (i.e. “the inorganic or composite non-liquid material”) covers a very large number of applicable materials which can*



*be used therefor, it is also contended that “a coating material” comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (**See MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof**). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

*Second Examiner’s Note: as to the specific preamble reciting “designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell”, it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

As to claims 76-77 and 85-86:

The WO’777 publication divulges that the blocking layer (the support) is made from a palladium silver alloy (ABSTRACT).

With reference to claims 80-81 and 89-90:

The WO’777 publication teaches that the palladium-silver layer has a thickness ranging from 5-50 Tm (page 4, lines 1-2/ page 5, lines 10-15). *In this case, it is noted that, at least, the end points (i.e. 5 Tm and/or 50 Tm) also constitute a valid date point and thus it anticipates the*

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*claim as the end point represents a specific disclosure of a discrete embodiment of the invention disclosed by the prior art which amounts to a complete description and, therefore, an anticipation of the claimed range. See Ex Parte Lee 31 USPQ2d 1105.*

The WO'777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrolyte component according to the foregoing description. However, the WO'777 publication fails to reveal the particular coating material.

Crome et al also disclose the following:

As to claim 31:

Crome et al disclose the following (COL 9, lines 10-26):

For all described embodiments, it is envisioned that the electrolyte material can be selected from the following groups and mixtures thereof: 10

5) lanthanum gallate  $\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{Ga}_{1-y}\text{Mg}_y\text{O}_3$  where 25  
( $0 < x < 0.30$ ) (where  $x=0.10$  is preferred) and ( $0.00 < y < 0.30$ )  
(where  $y=0.20$  is preferred).

Crome et al also envision that the electrolyte material can be selected from a variety of element groups and mixtures thereof including scandium (Sc) (CLAIM 12/ COL 9, lines 10-26). Thus, it is asserted that scandium (Sc) can replace gallium (Ga) in the ceramic composite chemical formula.

In view of this disclosure, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the specific proton conductor material of Crome et al on the metal substrate base of the WO'777 publication as Crome et al teaches that, for all described embodiments, it is envisioned that the electrolyte material can be selected from a variety of groups and mixtures including an alternative use of scandium element (Sc) as this allows the fuel cell stack to operate in multiple temperature regions including the claimed temperature range and

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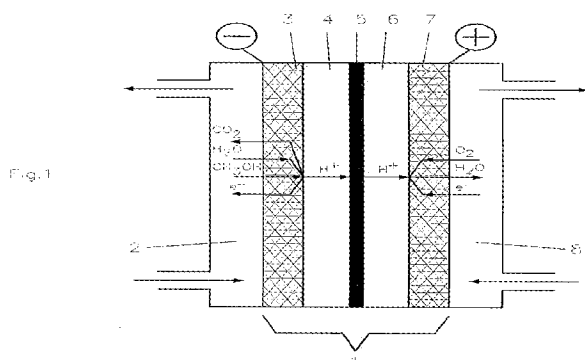
provides efficiency power systems. Moreover, Crome et al directly teach that scandium (Sc) can be a doping element which might substitute or replace any element in electrolyte composite materials. Further, those of ordinary skill in the art knows that scandium (Sc) element may be a substitute element in composite materials as both elements Sc and Ga shows the same chemical valence.

16. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the WO 98/21777 publication (herein called "*the WO'777 publication*") in view of the publication "Chemical stability and proton conductivity of doped BaCeO<sub>3</sub>-BaZrO<sub>3</sub> solid solutions" by Kwang Hyun Ryu et al (hereinafter referred to as "*the Kwang's publication*").

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

The WO'777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrode-electrolyte unit wherein the electrolyte is divided up into two electrolyte layers 4, 6 with a blocking layer 5 therebetween (ABSTRACT). The blocking layer is made from a palladium silver alloy. The electrolyte unit is suitable for fuel cells (ABSTRACT).

**Figure 1** below illustrates the palladium silver alloy foil layer 5 the two non-liquid electrolyte layers 4 and 6 (FIGURE 1). *Thus, the palladium silver alloy foil layer serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte layers which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.*



*First Examiner's Note: since the recited "coating material" (i.e. "the inorganic or composite non-liquid material") covers a very large number of applicable materials which can be used therefor, it is also contended that "a coating material" comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (**See MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof**). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

*Second Examiner's Note: as to the specific preamble reciting "designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell", it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

As to claims 76-77 and 85-86:

The WO'777 publication divulges that the blocking layer (the support) is made from a palladium silver alloy (ABSTRACT).

With reference to claims 80-81 and 89-90:

The WO'777 publication teaches that the palladium-silver layer has a thickness ranging from 5-50 Tm (page 4, lines 1-2/ page 5, lines 10-15). *In this case, it is noted that, at least, the end points (i.e. 5 Tm and/or 50 Tm) also constitute a valid date point and thus it anticipates the claim as the end point represents a specific disclosure of a discrete embodiment of the invention disclosed by the prior art which amounts to a complete description and, therefore, an anticipation of the claimed range. See Ex Parte Lee 31 USPQ2d 1105.*

The WO'777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrolyte component according to the foregoing description. However, the WO'777 publication fails to reveal the particular coating material.

The Kwang's publication teaches solid solutions such as  $\text{BaCe}_{0.9-x}\text{Zr}_x\text{M}_{0.1}\text{O}_{3-\Lambda}$  where M is Gd or Nd and x ranges from 0-0.4 (ABSTRACT). It is disclosed that this composition gives a good compromise between conductivity and stability for fuel cell applications (ABSTRACT).

In light of the above, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the solid composition of the Kwang's publication as the specific proton conducting material on the metal substrate base of the WO'777 publication because the Kwang's publication teaches this composition gives a good compromise between conductivity and stability for fuel cell applications as it has been found that this composite compound exhibits

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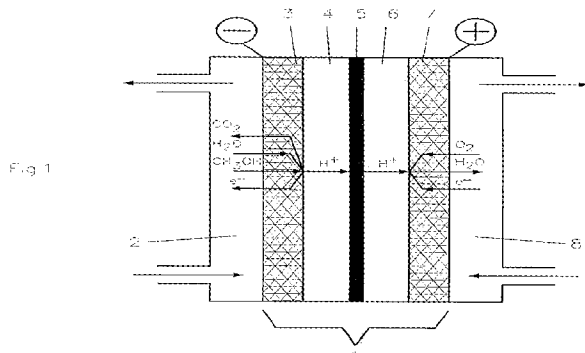
both high conductivity, good stability and an increased in the activation energy for proton transport.

17. Claims 75-82 and 84-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the WO 98/21777 publication (herein called "*the WO'777 publication*") in view of the publication "Proton and oxide ion conductivity of doped LaScO<sub>3</sub>" by Dorthé Lybye et al (hereinafter referred to as "*the Dorthé's publication*").

Regarding claims 75, 82, 84 and 91:

The WO'777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrode-electrolyte unit wherein the electrolyte is divided up into two electrolyte layers 4, 6 with a blocking layer 5 therebetween (ABSTRACT). The blocking layer is made from a palladium silver alloy. The electrolyte unit is suitable for fuel cells (ABSTRACT).

**Figure 1** below illustrates the palladium silver alloy foil layer 5 the two non-liquid electrolyte layers 4 and 6 (FIGURE 1). *Thus, the palladium silver alloy foil layer serves as the support which is coated on both sides by respective electrolyte layers which represents the inorganic/composite non-liquid material.*



*First Examiner's Note: since the recited "coating material" (i.e. "the inorganic or composite non-liquid material") covers a very large number of applicable materials which can be used therefor, it is also contended that "a coating material" comprising any non-liquid material would produce a component exhibiting the area-specific resistance (ASR) at the specific temperature range. Thus, such area-specific resistance (ASR) is an inherent characteristic or property of the respective electrolyte containing matrixes representing the inorganic/composite non-liquid material. That is, materials of at least similar compositions (i.e. any inorganic or composite non-liquid material) would be expected to have at least similar properties (**See MPEP 2112: Requirements of Rejection Based on Inherency; Burden of Proof**). Thus, the prior art coated component seems to be identical except that the prior art is silent as to an inherent property and/or characteristic. In that, it is noted that the extrinsic evidence makes clear that the missing descriptive matter is necessarily present in coated component described in the reference, and that it would be so recognized by persons of ordinary skill.*

*Second Examiner's Note: as to the specific preamble reciting "designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell", it is pointed out that the preamble refers to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility.*

As to claims 76-77 and 85-86:

The WO'777 publication divulges that the blocking layer (the support) is made from a palladium silver alloy (ABSTRACT).

With reference to claims 80-81 and 89-90:

The WO'777 publication teaches that the palladium-silver layer has a thickness ranging from 5-50 Tm (page 4, lines 1-2/ page 5, lines 10-15). *In this case, it is noted that, at least, the end points (i.e. 5 Tm and/or 50 Tm) also constitute a valid date point and thus it anticipates the claim as the end point represents a specific disclosure of a discrete embodiment of the invention disclosed by the prior art which amounts to a complete description and, therefore, an anticipation of the claimed range. See Ex Parte Lee 31 USPQ2d 1105.*

The WO'777 publication discloses a fuel cell electrolyte component according to the foregoing description. However, the WO'777 publication fails to reveal the particular coating material.

The Dorthe's publication teaches that conductivity of  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  has been studied (ABSTRACT), particularly at 400°C (Section: 2. EXPERIMENTAL). It is also disclosed that the conductivity measurements suggests that  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  is also a proton conductor (Section: 3. RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS).

In light of the above, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to use the compound of the Dorthe's publication as the specific proton conducting material on the metal substrate base of the WO'777 publication because the Dorthe's publication teaches that such compound exhibit excellent proton conduction at temperatures below 700°C. Accordingly, the specified compound is a proton conductor showing satisfactory ionic conductivity.



**(10) Response to Argument**

Appellant's arguments filed on 10/03/07 and 12/21/07 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Additionally, appellant's declarations submitted on 07/11/07 and 01/11/06 have been considered in its entirety.

Appellant's arguments have not changed substantially with respect to those previously advanced. They remain substantially unchanged. Appellant has simply repeated most arguments which have also been previously addressed by the examiner. See responses hereinafter which discuss those arguments in much greater details. Thus, there is no need to re-address those arguments.

As an initial matter, the examiner points out that the limitation "*having a thickness such that...*" does not have a positive limiting effect on the present claims because no specific thickness is being claimed. Now, to the extent that such a thickness "may be" correlated to the area-specific resistance for protons to apparently say that the present claims call for a particular thickness, then that is a different thing [sic]. Important to note is the fact that such a thickness appears to be an all-encompassing limitation because once the material limitation is met (i.e. specific single metal support and an inorganic-no liquid coating), such a material would be capable of exhibiting such an area-specific resistance irrespective of its thickness. In other words, it doesn't matter how thin or thick the coating is as long as the inorganic material be capable of showing the area-specific resistance. (EMPHASIS ADDED→) It does not matter whether it takes a first material .0001 nm (thickness), or 5 m (thickness) a second material to show the area-specific resistance because what appellant's invention is claiming is the ability of that material to achieve the claimed characteristic. Alternatively stated, the thickness itself does

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not limit the instant claim; what really limits the pending claims is the area-specific resistance. Appellant is concerned with achieving the specific degree of area-resistance at whatever thickness magnitude it takes to obtain it. Thickness of the coating material is not defining the present claims nor is a concern for the appellant. And this is exactly what the examiner is formulating in his rejection. One more point to note is that the range of the area-specific resistance is a broad range (i.e.  $0.01\text{-}100\ \Omega\cdot\text{cm}^2$ ). Thus, if the thickness is found to limit the present claims, it should be further noted that such a thickness limitation could be taken as an optimization of ranges. *“Where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges by routine experimentation”* ***In re Aller*** 220 F.2d 454, 456, 105 USPQ 233, 235 (CCPA 1955). See MPEP 2144.05. Additionally, the present claims would have been obvious because a person of ordinary skill has good reason to pursue the known options within his or her technical grasp. If this leads to the anticipated success, it is likely the product not of innovation but of ordinary skill and common sense. Stated differently, *obvious to try*—choosing from a finite number of predictable solutions is prima-facie obvious. KSR International Co. v. Teleflex Inc., 550 US- 82 USPQ2d 1385, 1396 (2007).

An argument advanced by the appellant is related to the rejection based upon Baucke et al’927. In this respect, appellant has asserted that *“Baucke...contains not a single, but two metal layers, which are actually the electrodes bracketing an electrolyte that has no metal”* and that *“The electrolyte itself, Ta<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, is thus bracketed by two metal sheets”*. In reply, the examiner submits that appellant’s characterization of the prior art with respect to the claimed invention is not appropriate. For instance, appellant is again reminded that he is claiming *“A proton-conducting membrane designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell”* and the recitation *“to*

*serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell*” has not been given patentable weight because it refers to intended use. Therefore, appellant’s invention circumscribes only “*a proton-conducting membrane*” itself comprising a single metal/metal hydride support, and specific coating material on at least one face thereof.

Appellant asserts that because Baucke et al’927 shows a bracketed configuration {electrode-electrolyte-electrode}, Baucke et al’927 does not read on appellant’s invention. The point that appellant appears to be overlooking is that any one of those two metal layers disclosed by Baucke et al’927 can act, indeed, as the support (*←emphasis added*). That is, any one of those two metal layers disclosed by Baucke et al’927 represents a *single* metal support per se (*←emphasis added*). Appellant is characterizing the teachings of Baucke et al’927 in the context of a well-defined fuel cell structure but making the allegation that his invention is different because his, at least, metal support is distinct from that metal element disclosed by Baucke et al’927. In a broad sense, the examiner sustains that there is no patentable distinction between any one of the two metal components disclosed by Baucke et al’927 and the metal support claimed by the appellant. Appellant is alleging that in Baucke et al’927 is imperative to have both electrodes bracketing the electrolyte. This is true in the context of a well-defined fuel cell structure but not in the context of appellant’s invention which only requires a single metal/metal hydride support, and specific coating material on at least one face of the support. Appellant is not claiming a fuel cell structure per se. Therefore, it is improper to discuss the Baucke et al’927 reference in the context of a fuel cell structure when appellant’s invention is so broad that it might read on any feature as long as such a feature consists essentially of at least a metal support and a specific coating thereon.

It is important to avoid losing the scope of the present invention. The examiner might side with the appellant if appellant were claiming a fuel cell unit comprising a first electrode, a second electrode and the specifically claimed proton-conducting membrane. In this particular case and in the context of a well-defined fuel cell structure, appellant might perhaps be right. However, in the context of appellant's invention, the claimed subject matter is merely a metal or metal hydride support having a coating material deposited thereon. Consequently, the electrolyte and at least one of the metal components of Baucke et al'927 does read on appellant's invention because they constitute of metal support and a coating layer in contact with or on the metal support.

With respect to appellant's arguments regarding the 35 USC 112 rejections not yet overcome, the examiner stands by these rejections based upon the cited case law, and makes no comments about settled law and/or appellant's characterization thereof.

First of all, appellant's current contention remains substantially the same contention already presented by the appellant and fully addressed by the examiner. Throughout the entire "Remark" section of the amendment dated 01/11/06 appellant continues to constructively and conveniently allege that the prior art of record does not disclose the claimed "*electrolyte*" (*i.e.* "*the thickness of the electrolyte*"; "*electrolytes containing Nafion*", "*electrolyte for a fuel cell*", "*by supporting the electron-insulating proton-conducting (EIPC) electrolyte on a metal or metal hydride support*"; "*claims 78-79 and 87-88 which do specify particular electrolytes*" and the *likes*). Nevertheless, appellant is again advised that the claimed invention is simply "a component", it is not an electrolyte per se. Nothing in the claim language positively sets forth the electrolyte as instantly argued by the appellant. That is to say, while appellant provides a lengthy

discussion regarding “the purportedly electrolyte”, the present claims do not positively recite it. Appellant has been previously advised that if he wants to claim an electrolyte, the claim language must set forth that in a precise, clear, correct, and unambiguous manner. The uncertainties of claim scope should be removed, as much as possible, for the sake of clarity and infringement. The primary purpose of this requirement of definiteness of claim language is to ensure that the scope of the claims is clear so the public is informed of the boundaries of what constitutes infringement of the patent. It is not fair to make reference to a purportedly electrolyte when appellant has failed to clearly stipulate the metes and bounds of the specific subject matter that will be protected by the patent grant. *All in all, appellant’s arguments do not circumscribe the claimed subject matter and are not commensurate in scope with the claimed invention.*

In response to appellant's arguments, the recitation “*designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell*” has not been given patentable weight because the recitation occurs in the preamble. A preamble is generally not accorded any patentable weight where it merely recites the purpose of a process or the intended use of a structure, and where the body of the claim does not depend on the preamble for completeness but, instead, the process steps or structural limitations are able to stand alone. See *In re Hirao*, 535 F.2d 67, 190 USPQ 15 (CCPA 1976) and *Kropa v. Robie*, 187 F.2d 150, 152, 88 USPQ 478, 481 (CCPA 1951). Moreover, the principal contention of appellants’ arguments is grounded on the assertion that because the claims ordinarily includes the preamble recitation. However, this assertion is still insufficient to overcome the rejection. In this regard, it is noted that in this particular instance the body of the claim following the preamble is a self-contained description of the structure and does not depend on the preamble for completeness *Kropa v. Robie* 88 UPSQ 480-481, *Rowe* 42USPQ2d 1553 and *IMS Technology*

*Inc. v. Haas Automation Inc 54 USPQ2d 1129, 1137*; additionally, the preamble is simply reciting the use or purpose of the claimed invention and thus it does not limit the claims *Catalina 62 USPQ2d 1785*; and the preamble merely extols benefits or features of the claimed invention and there is no clear reliance on those benefits or features as patentably significant *STX, LLC v. Brine Inc 54 USPQ2d 1347, 1349*.

In response to appellant's argument that “*designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell*”, a recitation of the intended use of the claimed invention must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. If the prior art structure is capable of performing the intended use, then it meets the claim.

In response to appellant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections are based on combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986). *This is to address appellant's arguments substantiating the lack of certain elements (i.e. the specific coating material) in the primary reference of record. In this instance, appellant is respectfully reminded that the present claims have been rejected under the 35 USC 103 statutory basis which permits the concrete employment of more than one reference for purposes of presenting a prima-facie case of obviousness. Thus, all appellant's comments discussing the primary reference or the secondary reference alone, individually or singly are irrelevant and ineffective to overcome such a rejection.*

In response to appellant's argument that “*such foils are disclosed only as separating membranes by Smotkin, not as supports for inorganic electrolytes that contain no liquid phase*” the fact that appellant has recognized another advantage which would flow naturally from following the suggestion of the prior art cannot be the basis for patentability when the differences would otherwise be obvious. See *Ex parte Obiaya*, 227 USPQ 58, 60 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1985). *Appellant is reminded one more time that the claims are not directed to the “alleged electrolyte”.* The actual inventors skill or what inventors likely would have done when faced with the reference is irrelevant. *Standard Oil Co. v. American Cyanamid* 227 USPQ 293 (Fed. Cir. 1985).

In response to appellant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992). The test for obviousness is not whether the features of a secondary reference may be bodily incorporated into the structure of the primary reference; nor is it that the claimed invention must be expressly suggested in any one or all of the references. Rather, the test is what the combined teachings of the references would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981). *In it, references do not need to be physically combinable* *In re Etter* 225 USPQ 1 (Fed. Cir 1985); *In re Nievel* 179 USPQ 224 (CCPA 1973).

Appellant's arguments do not comply with 37 CFR 1.111(c) because they do not clearly point out the patentable novelty which he or she thinks the claims present in view of the state of the art disclosed by the references cited or the objections made. Further, they do not show how the amendments avoid such references or objections. *This response is apposite because appellant has now admitted on the record the following: "There is no assertion on the part of appellant that new materials, invented by him, are the basis for patentability. The invention employs well known materials which have, however, not successfully been used as electrolytes in fuel cells in the temperature range required" (See the amendment of 01/11/06 at page 12, 2<sup>nd</sup> full paragraph). To that effect, it is noted that a newly discovered property does not necessarily mean the product is unobvious, since this property may be inherent in the prior art. In re Best 195 USPQ 430 (CCPA 1977); In re Swinehart 169 USPQ 226 (CCPA 1971). If the prior art teaches the same compound, discovery of its structure does not make the compound unobvious. In re Paquette 165 USPQ 317 (CCPA 1970); In re Ranier 153 USPQ 802 (CCPA 1967). Where the prior art product is very similar to the claimed product, the discovery of additional properties which are held in common, does not make the compound unobvious In re Mod 161 USPQ 281 (CCPA 1969); In re DeMontmollin 145 USPQ 416 (CCPA 1965).*

In response to appellant's arguments against the references individually, one cannot show nonobviousness by attacking references individually where the rejections are based on combinations of references. See *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 208 USPQ 871 (CCPA 1981); *In re Merck & Co.*, 800 F.2d 1091, 231 USPQ 375 (Fed. Cir. 1986).

Appellant has mostly contended that the bases for the 35 USC 103 rejections may be in error simply because the secondary references, in general, do not teaches that "*the specific*



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*coating material...when used as an electrolyte is required to be so thin*”, or “*the resulting electrolyte must be supplied in a fragile, very thin layer*”. First of all, appellant is reminded herein one more time that his intended invention is “*a component*” per se, that is, any component comprising a metal/metal hydride support coated with the specific material. All over again, the specific preamble reciting “designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell” is still deemed to refer to intended use. That is, the claim is directed to any component per se and such preamble is only a statement of ultimate intended utility. That being said, it is thus contested that the foregoing appellant’s arguments are not commensurate in scope with the instantly claimed invention (i.e. the component itself). Secondly, other than stating an apparent relationship between the thickness of the coating and its area-specific protonic resistance, there is nothing in the present claim language that positively recites or fairly sets forth the thickness (i.e. how thin) of the coating material so as to further define at least a coating structure. Thus, absent further stipulations about the specific thickness of the coating material, appellant’s arguments concerning this particular matter are inapposite and unfounded. Moreover, while appellant may believe that there is such a close relationship between the coating thickness and the coating protonic resistance characteristics, there is little information on the record, and ultimately recited in the claims, supporting said appellant’s contention.

In response to appellant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5

USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

*In this case, it is believed that all of the cited and applied references (primary and secondary references) are pertinent to each other, and in due course, within the field of appellant's endeavor as they all discuss subject matter about significant protonic activity, functionality and applicability for electrochemical cells, particularly, fuel cells. Thus, since they all share the same field of endeavor and appellant's field of endeavor, it can be fairly stated that they all are relevant to one another, and those of skilled in the art would definitely look at the applied references as a whole combination to instruct themselves about protonic activity in membranes and resolve issues associated with such protonic membrane when used as electrolyte components in power generating fuel cells.*

In response to appellant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of appellant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which appellant relies (i.e., "*the thin layer*" or "*ultra-thin layer*") are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993). *Nothing in the present claims sets forth the intended thickness of the coating material.*

In particular response to appellant's arguments that the recitation "*designed to serve as an electrolyte in a fuel cell*" has not been given patentable weight because the recitation occurs in the preamble. A preamble is generally not accorded any patentable weight where it merely recites the purpose of a process or the intended use of a structure, and where the body of the claim does not depend on the preamble for completeness but, instead, the process steps or structural limitations are able to stand alone. See *In re Hirao*, 535 F.2d 67, 190 USPQ 15

(CCPA 1976) and *Kropa v. Robie*, 187 F.2d 150, 152, 88 USPQ 478, 481 (CCPA 1951).

*(emphasis added→) Appellant's attention is particularly directed to the following, in this case, i) the body of the claim following the preamble is a self-contained description of the structure and does not depend on the preamble for completeness Kropa v. Robbie, 88 USPQ 480-481; Rowe USPQ2d 1553; IMS Technology Inc. vs. Haas Automation Inc. 54 USPQ2d 1129, 1137; ii) the preamble recites the use or purpose of the claimed invention and thus, it does not limit the claims Catalina, 62 USPQ2d 1785; iii) the preamble merely extols benefits or features of the claimed invention and there is no clear reliance on those benefits or features as patentably significant STX, LLC v. Brine, Inc. 54 USPQ2d 1347, 1349.*

Appellant has provided a variety of arguments throughout the entire Remark section of the foregoing amendment. The main and principal arguments can be essentially summarized as follows: a) *"no reference was cited that discloses a coating of an electronically-insulating proton-conducting (EIPC) material that is an inorganic or composite non-liquid on a metal or metal hydride support"*; b) *"No motivation has been shown for combining the permeability barriers of Smotkin or WO'777 with any of the disclosed EIPC materials"*; c) *"...there is objective evidence of nonobviousness in Norby..."*.

With respect to appellant's arguments regarding the electronically-insulating proton-conducting (EIPC) material being an inorganic or composite non-liquid, the examiner briefly states that appellant's claim interpretation differs from the examiner's claim interpretation. In that, it is further stated that the specific claim language *"an inorganic or composite non-liquid material"* has been construed as reciting either an inorganic material per se or a composite non-liquid material. Accordingly, this interpretation permits the inclusion of any inorganic material as

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well as any composite non-liquid material. In contrast, appellants now argues that such claim language specifically refers to either an inorganic non-liquid material or a composite non-liquid material. The examiner respectfully disagrees with appellant's claim interpretation. Accordingly, in its broadest-semantically reasonable interpretation, it is strenuously contended that the present claim language encompasses two extremely large groups of materials: a ) any inorganic material (regardless of its state {liquid, solid or gas or plasma}), or b) any composite non-liquid material. That's why it is reiterated that the coating materials of the prior art fully satisfy the claimed requirement of being either an inorganic material (*i.e. Smotkin's concentrated phosphoric acid in a silicon carbide matrix or concentrated potassium hydroxide in a potassium hexatitanate matrix*) or composite non-liquid material (*i.e. Smotkin's Nafion 115 polymer or the WO'777 free-standing polymer membrane*).

In response to appellant's argument that “*No motivation has been shown for combining the permeability barriers of Smotkin or WO'777 with any of the disclosed EIPC materials*”, the fact that appellant has recognized another advantage/disadvantage which would flow naturally from following the suggestion of the prior art cannot be the basis for patentability when the differences would otherwise be obvious. See *Ex parte Obiaya*, 227 USPQ 58, 60 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1985).

Concerning appellant's arguments regarding the applicability and validity of the *Norby* reference, it appears that appellant is attempting to disqualify or discredit the teachings of *all* prior art references based upon *Norby's* singular findings. That is to say, appellant is apparently of the opinion that the authenticity and soundness of the technical and scientific evidence of *Norby's* findings is strong enough that no other reference (prior art) at all can be cited or used,

for technical and objective purposes, in view of Norby's finding. The examiner again respectfully disagrees with appellant's position. Furthermore, the examiner makes no comments about the validity, applicability, authenticity or technical authority of both the Norby's findings and/or the prior art of record. The prior art of record has been cited hereinabove because they, in fact, discloses substantially the same subject matter that appellant is intending to claim as the invention. As a consequence, appellant's arguments including any *vis-à-vis* comparison between the prior art of record and the Norby's finding lacks validity in its entirety, and thus, they have been fully discarded, deemed inappropriate, and not considered on their merits.

In addition, the examiner also wishes to briefly address other arguments raised by the appellant on the Remark section.

In response to appellant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of appellant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which appellant relies (i.e., "*Yet the Nafion component prevents structures such as those in the cited references from operating in the desired temperature range, i.e. much above 100 °C...*") are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

In response to appellant's argument that the examiner's conclusion of obviousness is based upon improper hindsight reasoning, it must be recognized that any judgment on obviousness is in a sense necessarily a reconstruction based upon hindsight reasoning. But so long as it takes into account only knowledge which was within the level of ordinary skill at the time the claimed invention was made, and does not include knowledge gleaned only from the

appellant's disclosure, such a reconstruction is proper. See *In re McLaughlin*, 443 F.2d 1392, 170 USPQ 209 (CCPA 1971).

In response to appellant's argument that there is no suggestion to combine the references, the examiner recognizes that obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art. See *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 USPQ2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988) and *In re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 21 USPQ2d 1941 (Fed. Cir. 1992). *In this case, the applied references are combinable between them simply because they all address the same problem of providing suitable membrane components per se as instantly claimed.*

In response to appellant's argument that “*Smotkin use a Pd or other metal or metal hydride in addition to a polymer membrane EIPC layer for one stated reason: it prevents diffusion of carbon dioxide or fuels such as methanol across the membrane assembly...*”, the fact that appellant has recognized another advantage/disadvantage which would flow naturally from following the suggestion of the prior art cannot be the basis for patentability when the differences would otherwise be obvious. See *Ex parte Obiaya*, 227 USPQ 58, 60 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1985).

Arguments that the alleged anticipatory prior art is “*nonanalogous art*” or “*teaches away*” from the invention’ or is not recognized as solving the problem solved by the claimed invention, are not germane to a rejection under section 35 USC 102. *Twin Disc, Inc. v. United States*, 231 USPQ 417, 424. See also *State Contracting & Eng ’ g Corp. v. Condotte America*,

Inc., 346 F.3d 1057, 1068, 68 USPQ2d 1481, 1488 (See MPEP 2131.05 [R-2] Nonanalogous Art).

In response to appellant's arguments that "*When saying it would be obvious to combine references that teach other EIPC materials with the teachings of Smotkin or WO'777, the office assumes, without explaining, that such barrier function would also be desirable in combination...*" and/or "*There is no basis in the references to expect the claimed combination to succeed*", since the prior art references do not provide any indication that such materials are specially restricted to any particular system and/or environment as speculated by the appellants, the burden is shifted to the appellants to provide objective evidence demonstrating that such other EIPC materials when used as applied in the membrane of Smotkin or the WO'777 will indeed cause detrimental effects thereto. That is to say, the burden is shifted to the appellants to supply, provide or present objective evidence showing why such other EIPC materials cannot function in a substantially similar membrane structure.

In response to appellant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of appellant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which appellant relies (i.e., "*the support is coated with the EIPC material so that the two are interfaced well enough to provide proton conductivity through the multiplayer composite*" or "*intimate interface*") are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993). *The present claims are absolutely silent as to the specific interfacing limitation; they just recite "a coating" regardless of its specific interfacing, embedding, interconnecting and/or adhesiveness structure.* In the absence of a specific definition

of what constitutes “a coating” per se, it is contended that “a coating” is any layer or film material.

In response to appellant's argument that “...*then hot-presses the polymer membrane onto the treated foil, which ensures that the ion-conducting polymer is intensively bound to the surface of the interlayer*”, the fact that appellant has recognized another advantage/disadvantage which would flow naturally from following the suggestion of the prior art cannot be the basis for patentability when the differences would otherwise be obvious. See *Ex parte Obiaya*, 227 USPQ 58, 60 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1985).

Appellant has contended that “*The cited references provide no guidance on the preparation or properties of coating of such EIPC materials on any support*”. In the same manner, the present claims also fail to provide guidance on such preparation. Thus, such “no guidance” argument is equally applicable to both the present claim language and the prior art of record.

In response to appellant's argument that “*the reference state that the Nafion membranes only operates at temperatures where they are hydrated-see Norby*”, the fact that appellant has recognized another advantage/disadvantage which would flow naturally from following the suggestion of the prior art cannot be the basis for patentability when the differences would otherwise be obvious. See *Ex parte Obiaya*, 227 USPQ 58, 60 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1985).

In response to appellant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of appellant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which appellant relies (i.e., “*The ASR limitation is included to limit the thickness of the coating*”) are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the



specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993). *The present claims do not recite any particular thickness at all. Moreover, appellant's attempt to equate the limitation ASR to thickness is completely out of place in view of lack of scientific evidence which correlates the ASR to thickness.*

In response to appellant's arguments that "...since the present application relates fuel cell construction, references to hydrogen permeable membrane, even if used in conjunction with a fuel cell, are arguably non-analogous art", it is merely contended that the present claims are directed to "a component" per se. In other words, the present claims are not directed to "a fuel cell" itself; therefore, appellant's argument are not commensurate in scope with the invention.

In response to appellant's argument that "...Crome is really non-analogous art..." is nonanalogous art, it has been held that a prior art reference must either be in the field of appellant's endeavor or, if not, then be reasonably pertinent to the particular problem with which the appellant was concerned, in order to be relied upon as a basis for rejection of the claimed invention. See *In re Oetiker*, 977 F.2d 1443, 24 USPQ2d 1443 (Fed. Cir. 1992). *In this case, the mere fact that Crome discloses the materials can be electrolyte provides sufficient guidance to those of ordinary skill in art to combine Crome's teachings or, at least, potentially consider Crome's teachings as possible electrolytic features.*

With respect to appellant's argument concerning that "*the fact that Sc is among the variety of groups and mixtures enumerated in the reference does not render it "obvious" in the absence of guidance that would lead one to select that particular tree from among the forest of alternatives and mixture thereof*", the examiner positively contends that the prior art of record specifically named "Sc". It is additionally asserted that the generic chemical formula of a prior

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art does anticipate the claimed species covered by the formula when the species can be “at once envisaged” from the formula. That is, when the compound is not specifically named, but instead it is necessary to select portions of teachings within a reference and combine them, e.g., select various substituents from a list of alternatives given for placement at specific sites on a generic chemical formula to arrive at a specific composition, anticipation can only be found if the classes of substituents are sufficiently limited or well delineated. If one of ordinary skill in the art is able to “*at once envisage*” the specific compound within the generic chemical formula, the compound is anticipated. In this case, it is stated that the prior art of record clearly names or identifies the claimed Sc element, if not, at least the prior art of record does envisage the use of the claimed Sc element.

With respect to appellant’s arguments that “*The composition in Kwang do exhibit at least some proton conductivity, however, their properties are not well explored*” and “*...Kwang is an investigation in progress...*”, it is noted that a newly discovered property does not necessarily mean the product is unobvious, since this property may be inherent in the prior art. *In re Best 195 USPQ 430; In re Swinehart 169 USPQ 226.*

In response to appellant’s arguments that “*Lybye discusses  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  and present results that  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  is not only an oxide conductor but also a proton conductor...the reference teaches that this material was also found to have substantial p-type conductivity...is thus at best a mixed conductor*”, it is noted that products of identical chemical composition can not have mutually exclusive properties, and thus, the claimed property of being electronically-insulating proton-conducting (EIPC) is necessarily present in the prior art material. On the other hand, *assuming arguendo* that  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  does not exhibit the claimed

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EIPC property (as argued by the appellant), it can thus be reasonably stated that appellant's  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  material also fails to exhibit such claimed EIPC property (←emphasis added). Thus, appellant's claim that his  $\text{La}_{0.9}\text{Sr}_{0.1}\text{Sc}_{0.9}\text{Mg}_{0.1}\text{O}_3$  material is indeed an EIPC material may be incorrect, ill-founded and misleading. *Appellant is courteously required to explain or clarify this issue; otherwise it may be further understood that such material or other claimed materials are not EIPC materials* (←emphasis added).

**(11) Related Proceeding(s) Appendix**

No decision rendered by a court or the Board is identified by the examiner in the Related Appeals and Interferences section of this examiner's answer.

For the above reasons, it is believed that the rejections should be sustained.

Respectfully submitted,

/Raymond Alejandro/

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